

Date Mailed  
November 21, 2000

BEFORE THE  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

Request for Designation of the Telephone Number 211  
in Wisconsin as a Non-emergency Information and Call  
Referral Number Related to Health and Human Services  
Matters

05-TI-233

**NOTICE OF TECHNICAL CONFERENCE  
AND OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENTS**

**Technical Conference Date:** December 7, 2000 – 10:00 a.m.

**Technical Conference Location:** Public Service Commission  
610 North Whitney Way  
Madison, WI

**Comments Due:**  
**November 29, 2000 – by Noon**

**Address Comments To:**  
**Lynda L. Dorr, Secretary to the Commission**  
**Public Service Commission**  
P.O. Box 7854  
Madison, WI 53707-7854  
**Fax No. (608) 266-3957**

**FAX Due:**

**November 28, 2000 – by Noon**

**THIS IS A CONTINUING PROCEEDING** on whether and how the Commission should designate the telephone number 211 in Wisconsin as a non-emergency information and call referral number related to health and human services matters, and whether such number should be specifically assigned for use by the Metropolitan Milwaukee 211 Stakeholders Council in the Milwaukee area and by the United Way of Dane County in Dane County. This proceeding will address the creation of appropriate procedures to implement 211 in this state.

**BACKGROUND**

On February 26, 1999, the Metropolitan Milwaukee 211 Stakeholders Council (Stakeholders Council) petitioned the Commission to “designate 211 as the three-digit access number for use throughout the state of Wisconsin for non-emergency information and referral

phone calls for health and human services<sup>1</sup>.” The Commission issued a *Notice of Proceeding and Investigation* on May 5, 1999, inviting comments on this proposal. The Commission discussed this 211 proposal at its open meeting of August 12, 1999, and declined to make the 211 number designation due to various concerns, including the fact that the 211 designation was under Federal Communications Commission (FCC) jurisdiction and the FCC had not yet made a determination.

On April 28, 2000, the United Way of Dane County (United Way) petitioned the Commission to “designate the telephone number ‘211’ for use throughout Dane County for non-emergency information and referrals regarding health and human services (called ‘I&R Services’).” The Commission staff requested additional information addressing cost, logistics, and implementation concerns that the Commission had expressed relative to the original Stakeholders Council petition. Both the United Way and the Stakeholders Council responded to the Commission’s concerns by letter.

Since the petitions were filed and the Stakeholders Council and the United Way filed additional information, the FCC has acted on 211<sup>2</sup>. The FCC’s *Third Report and Order* was published on July 31, 2000. That *Third Report and Order* states, in part:

We believe that providing access to community information and referral services using 211 has many benefits. Individuals will now have an easy to remember nationwide number to call when they need non-emergency help. Unlike 311, which is being used in some communities to provide access to non-emergency police services, the range of services that will be available using 211 is of a much broader scope. We are mindful that the Commission in the N11 First Report and Order gave local jurisdictions discretion to use 311 for access to government services that might, in some instances, overlap the services to be provided using 211. We are not convinced, as are some commenters, that this will cause confusion among callers as to which N11 code should be used to access what type of information. To the contrary, we believe that the extensive education campaign that the Information and Referral Petitioners and others have undertaken to publicize the use of 211 has and will continue to eliminate any potential confusion.

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(W)e believe that access to community information and referral services using 211 will provide a vital adjunct to existing 311 services. We also believe that 211 service for access to community information and referral services will provide a useful adjunct to 911 service by further reducing calls to 911 that do not require immediate dispatch of police, fire, or medical personnel.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Although the petition requested that 211 be designated for use throughout the state, the Stakeholders Council indicated an intention to implement this referral number in the greater Milwaukee area.

<sup>2</sup> *Third Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration*, CC Docket No. 92-105, Released July 31, 2000, (*Third Report and Order*)

<sup>3</sup> *Third Report and Order*, Para. 20.

## **FURTHER INVESTIGATION**

Although the FCC has acted on 211, thus removing certain jurisdictional concerns that caused the Commission not to act on the Stakeholders Council petition last year, there are still important implementation matters that the Commission believes need to be addressed to assure reasonable service in this state. The Commission will investigate this 211 issue pursuant to its broad authority in Wis. Stat. §§ 196.02 (1) and (7). Issues that need to be addressed are broadly summarized as how and to whom the 211 number will be assigned and what implementation factors need to be addressed and resolved to have the 211 service work effectively and efficiently.

To address general policy related to a 211 number assignment, as well as operational, implementation, customer education, and cost recovery implications of the proposed use of 211 in Wisconsin, the Commission will accept further comments and will also schedule a Technical Conference. The Commission intends this further proceeding to help clarify issues so that currently pending 211 proposals, if found reasonable, can proceed to implementation, and so that entities in other parts of the state will have a better understanding of how to move forward to effectuate 211. The Stakeholders Council and the United Way of Dane County have done substantial work to ready the offering of 211 information and call referral services in their respective areas. The Technical Conference, in particular, is intended as a means to allow the petitioners and the involved telecommunications companies in Milwaukee County and Dane County to address any outstanding matters that would impact implementation.

Issues to be addressed at the Technical Conference, and on which persons may file written comments, are as follow:

1. What process should the Commission use for accepting, reviewing, and granting/denying requests for use of the 211 dialing code in particular areas? If there are competing requests for the designation of the 211 number in a particular area, how should the competing requests be handled?
2. Are there circumstances under which petitioning entities or agencies should not be allowed to provide 211 service? (i.e. creating a markup for subscribers to use the service.)
3. Is there any reason not to grant the petitions for 211 of the Metropolitan Milwaukee 211 Stakeholders Council and the United Way of Dane County?
4. What are the expected costs of providing 211 service?
5. Should the participating telecommunications companies be required to file tariffs associated with providing this service? What issues should be covered by the tariffs?

6. How will 211 calls be routed? (i.e. will there be simple translation of 211 dialing code to a seven digit number via call forwarding arrangements, or should there be a more complex transfer mechanism?)
7. What arrangements and timelines should be set for any companies now using 211 for other calling purposes?
8. How will cellular and PCS callers be handled when dialing 211?
9. Shall 211 be required to work from pay telephones?
10. How long will it take to “turn up” each 211 service? What steps are necessary before the service can be placed in operation?

### **TECHNICAL CONFERENCE**

**NOTICE IS GIVEN** that the Commission will hold a technical conference on Thursday, **December 7, 2000**, at 10:00 a.m. in the Amnicon Falls Hearing Room at the Public Service Commission Building, 610 North Whitney Way, Madison, Wisconsin.

This building is accessible to people in wheelchairs through the Whitney Way first floor (lobby) entrance. Parking for people with disabilities is available on the south side of the building. The Commission does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provision of programs, services, or employment. Any person with a disability who needs accommodations to participate in this proceeding or who needs to get this document in a different format should contact the Telecommunications Division staff member listed below.

### **COMMENTS**

Interested persons may file comments on 211 and the issues identified above. Any petitioner or telecommunications provider who desires to file comments should submit an original and 15 copies as indicated in the box above. Members of the public need only file an original. These comments must be received by noon on Wednesday, **November 29, 2000**. Comments by fax are due one day earlier. Fax filing cover sheets must state “Official Filing” and include the docket number and the number of pages (limit of 20 pages). **File by one mode only.**

## QUESTIONS

Questions regarding this matter may be directed to Gary A. Evenson, Assistant Administrator of the Telecommunications Division, at telephone number (608) 266-6744, or by email at *evensg@psc.state.wi.us*.

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin, \_\_\_\_\_

By the Commission:

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Lynda L. Dorr  
Secretary to the Commission

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